

ISO 14001 DEQ Strives for Excellence through Registration

DEQ recently began developing and implementing an environmental management system (EMS) program that complies with ISO 14001. The program, which is a voluntary program of environmental management standards, is recognized worldwide by the **International Organization for Standardization (ISO)** based in Geneva, Switzerland. The system will help the agency maintain a high standard of work quality and timeliness.

The International Organization for Standardization is a non-governmental organization that was established in 1947. ISO 14001 is the international **Environmental Management System (EMS)** standard series that is universally applicable in the industrialized nations of the world.

ISO is made up of national standards institutes from countries large and small, industrialized and developing, in all regions of the world. Experts on loan from the industrial, technical, business and public sectors that have asked for the standards and subsequently put them to use carry out this work. ISO standards represent an international consensus on the state-of-the-art management system for each organization that earns the ISO registration.

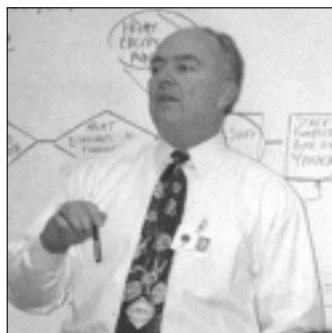
The first step in this process involves putting an ISO-compliant EMS program into operation. After operating under the EMS for at least 90 days, DEQ can request an audit to support an ISO 14001 registration.

Once registration is complete, DEQ may become the first state environmental regulatory agency in the country to have accomplished this feat.

ISO 14001 was developed with the aim of providing a framework for an overall strategic approach to an organization's environmental policy, plans and actions.

It is a set of common sense environmental management system specifications that will be adopted as a part of that system.

An ISO 14001 compliant EMS is an integrated management system



Pictured clockwise from top left: Admon McCastle, (Community/Industry Relations); Pam Kimball (Litter Reduction and Public Action); Tom Patterson, (Office of Management and Finance); and Lloyd Blount, (Office of the Secretary) are a few of the more than 1,200 employees of DEQ who will soon be empowered to develop better operating procedures under a system of ISO 14001 registration.

whereby environmental considerations are documented and woven into work activities at all levels of the organization so that DEQ can achieve its mission of protecting the public, DEQ employees and the environment. Further, it is a management tool enabling an organization of any size or type to control the impact of its activities, products or services on the environment. An EMS provides a structured approach to setting environmental objectives and to achieving and demonstrating that they have been accomplished. Dale Givens, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality says that he wants DEQ to serve as a role model for companies that DEQ regulates so that they recognize the importance of having a formal EMS. It is also a system that will be updated

and reviewed on a regular basis.

Once registered, DEQ's EMS will be audited regularly by an accredited ISO registrar to make sure that DEQ is meeting the standards in the EMS and to make certain that there is continuous improvement of environmental management plans, processes and procedures. DEQ will continue with internal audits and will make corrective actions as necessary to improve the system.

Dale Givens says that with this new program, planning and review will be ongoing. This is one of the key factors in maintaining registration.

The development of the system documentation for ISO 14001 is a big job. It requires time for the review of processes and activities, the identification of environmental

aspects, the documentation of environmental management processes, the approval of the documentation and the integration of that documentation into the EMS. Employee interviews will be an integral step to accomplish this.

For instance, Bill DeVille, DEQ's Quality Assurance Manager, says that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will be written, to assure that procedures are well designed and that employees understand their roles in meeting DEQ's environmental objectives. Although this is a task for management, it is necessary to have the input of the employees who perform the jobs to ensure that all steps are included. Without teamwork, this important part of the process will not work.

All employees will also receive ISO Awareness Training. DeVille said the training shows that DEQ is committed to making certain that "...all employees throughout the organization understand what the organization is about, what the mission and policies are and to ensure that they have an understanding of how their work process relates to the Department's accomplishment of its environmental mission."

DeVile said ISO 14001 would have a direct effect on employees.

The success of achieving and maintaining registration will be directly related to each individual's effort in his/her specific area. ISO registration will offer DEQ employees many advantages, some of which are a competitive edge and enhanced job security through the continual improvement factors built into the EMS. It empowers every employee to help develop better operating procedures in support of DEQ's environmental missions.

Our customers demand — and deserve — quality service. Registration of DEQ's EMS by a third party will provide a quality assurance umbrella that will help us to meet our customer's expectations.

Choosing ISO 14001 registration sends a clear message that says DEQ is committed to being a leading force in the environmental arena. 